

**To: Mayor Mark Kruzan
Common Council of the City of Bloomington**

**From: David Hummons, Chair
Bloomington Commission on the Status of Black Males**

Re: Annual Report from the Commission on the Status of Black Males

Date: February 13, 2006

The City of Bloomington's Commission on the Status of Black Males was created to address the problems faced by African-American males in the areas of health, employment, criminal justice, and education. The purposes and duties of the group include, in part, to serve as a catalyst to promote positive public and private remedies to address the multi-faceted problems confronting Black males in the community, to organize and convene community forums and focus groups to discuss the status of Black males, and to network with like-minded groups in the community and the state. The seven members of the Commission during 2005 included Commission Chair David Hummons (appointed by the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration Commission), William Knox (Common Council), Larry Brown (Human Rights Commission), Cedric Harris (Mayor), Paulette Patterson Dilworth (Mayor), Genevieve Williamson (Common Council), and George W. Tardy, Jr. (Mayor). With the recent resignation of Genevieve Williamson, there is one vacancy (Common Council). Staff support is provided by Liaison Craig Brenner and Program Assistant Lee Bowlen.

The Commission has completed its fifth year, making significant progress on several on-going initiatives. The 2004 Town Hall Meeting on the topic of "Race, School Discipline, and Criminal Justice" widely reported in *The Herald-Times*, and subsequent efforts by MCCSC Superintendent John Maloy resulted in creation of the MCCSC Human Understanding and Diversity Forum. After a year of study, including input from the public, faculty, staff, and members of the Commission, the forum issued recommendations in December to Dr. Maloy and MCCSC that address the school corporation's policies and procedures. A copy of the recommendations is attached to this report.

During 2005, we continued to address employment issues. Daniel Grundmann, Director of Employee Services for the City of Bloomington, attended our May meeting to discuss increasing the pool of applicants for city positions. We also continued to support the goals of the community's Racial Justice Task Force, in particular the seven recommendations presented at the Town Hall Meeting by panelist and RJTF member Guy Loftman (attached to this report). We continue to believe that full implementation of these recommendations will have a positive impact on those involved with the criminal justice system in Monroe County, and we decided that one of the most difficult recommendations – placing digital video cameras in all police

vehicles in Monroe County – deserved special attention. We are working to establish a committee consisting of representatives from the community to support this recommendation.

Having worked with Mayor Kruzan and the Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department during 2004 to rename Ninth Street Park in honor of Rev. Ernest D. Butler, we were pleased to be involved in the official ceremony in June of 2005.

We continue to work with the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males. During 2005, we participated in the 7th Annual African American Male National Conference: Education vs. Incarceration, in Indianapolis, where we presented two workshops to conference attendees from around the country on the topic “Developing a Local Commission: Best Practices.” We have a good relationship with the new Executive Director of the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males, and he recently attended one of our meetings in Bloomington and discussed the Indiana Commission and ways we can work together.

Many guests and representatives of community and governmental organizations attended Commission meetings during 2005, including representatives from the Monroe County Council, MCCSC, Monroe County Racial Justice Task Force, I.U. School of Education, Community Justice and Mediation Center, and Safe and Civil City Program. We also supported and provided significant input into the design of conflict resolution training sessions by the Community Justice and Mediation Center, with one member of the Commission participating as a trainer, and we took part in the Juneteenth Celebration, Soul Food Festival, and Men of Color Leadership Conference held at Indiana University-Bloomington.

The Commission concluded 2005 by creating a new award to be presented annually during Black History Month that will recognize and affirm young African American males. The Mayor announced the award and called for nominations at the King Birthday celebration, and we will honor the first recipient later this month.

For detailed information on the activities of the Commission, please refer to the City’s Web site at www.bloomington.in.gov/cfrd.

Addendum: Racial Justice Task Force Recommendations received from Guy Loftman.

1. Seek a built in TV camera and recorder in each BPD and MCSD squad car set to automatically come on when flashing lights are turned on.
2. Adjust bond schedule to allow \$500 cash OR surety at initial release, not both. (Bond has already undergone major change since our initial study)
3. Make hearing date notice particularly obvious when people are in court. A separate, bright yellow colored paper with dates and times of mandatory appearances would be separately handed to the Defendant with express identification by court that those are the times to appear.
4. Seek backup notice address, phone and contact person for court and probation to minimize FTAs.
5. Don't require the defendant to appear personally at pretrial conferences.
6. Initiate a public education program on how the courts and criminal justice system work. Youth, especially should be informed of how to act if approached by police, if called to court or probation, and what to do if they believe they have been harassed or abused.
7. Initiate sliding fee for Pre-Trial Diversion Program.







Forum on Race, Equity and Human Understanding in Education

Proposal on the Prevention and Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion

Introduction:

The Forum on Race, Equity and Human Understanding applauds Superintendent Dr. John A. Maloy and the Monroe County School Corporation for declaring diversity as one of its highest priorities. The fact that Human Understanding and Diversity resides among the school corporation's four pillars demonstrates a strong commitment to serving the needs of **all** of the students, families, teachers and community members of the school district.

While it has only been three years since its inception, the MCCSC has made solid strides in its advancement of Human Understanding and Diversity. Such strides include:

-  The formation of the Advisory Committee for Human Understanding and Diversity. The Advisory Committee released a report regarding the recruitment and retention of people of color, sensitivity, professional development and curriculum.
-  The establishment of HU&D committees in every school building and central office.
-  The hiring of several trainers and diversity experts, Shana Ritter, Jeff Harlig, and Daniel Baron, to work with the MCCSC staff and administration to create cultural awareness and establish cultural competency throughout the district.
-  Participation in the 2004 Bloomington Commission on the Status of Black Males Town Hall Meeting on Race, School Discipline and Criminal Justice. The public forum directly led to the MCCSC establishment of Forum Race, Equity and Human Understanding.
-  This school year, the MCCSC also established HU&D building coaches to support the work that continues in each building. Nearly 60 staff members and administrators are participating in on-going HU&D training that kicked off in Oct. 2005. The goal for 2005-2006 is to create a common language and to continue thoughtful dialogue and activities that promote cultural competency.
-  The continuation of HU&D Community Days, allowing the district to dialogue with the community and view the work and growth that is occurring in each

building. The next HU&D Community Day is 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 8 at South High School.

As an outgrowth of Human Understanding and Diversity efforts, the Forum strongly encourages and supports Dr. Maloy and the MCCSC in its quest for change and vision to provide all students, especially students of color and diversity, with access, opportunities and educational environment needed to succeed.

The Forum:

As a direct outgrowth of the 2004 Bloomington Commission on the Status of Black Males Town Hall Meeting and the MCCSC's Human Understanding and Diversity efforts, the Forum on Race, Equity and Human Understanding established its mission:

To address the expressed community concerns, regarding the school experiences of students of color and their parents and to recommend positive changes in those practices that impede student success.

The Recommendations:

The Forum opened its deliberations twice to public input, once for open-ended comments and then for roundtable discussions. Our focus coincided with the original focus of the Town Hall Meeting: Prevention and Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion. The following proposal is distilled from those meetings as well as many month of challenging dialogue among the forum members and community participants.

The Forum believes the greatest priority is to provide students with a **school environment that drastically minimizes the necessity for resorting to suspension or expulsion.** Suspensions and expulsions hold negative outcomes for all students. This means that the best solution to the problem of racial disparities in administration of disciplinary policies and practices is through prevention and a creating a nurturing a **school climate that promotes a sense of ownership, belonging and involvement on the part of all students and families.**

Section A: Alternatives to Suspension & Expulsion

1. **Review of Board Policy** - The community needs for a long-overdue review and examination board policy, guidelines, practices relating to suspension and expulsion hearings. Such review should include public input, legal advice and debate. An awareness campaign also should be established to generate a better understanding of disciplinary procedures, especially throughout our communities of color. Parents also want to be assured of inclusion in the decision-making process earlier in the disciplinary process, before suspensions are imposed. When an expulsion hearing is inevitable, parents and students need support to navigate a potentially intimidating process and evaluate options, in the interest of assuring due process. If allowed by law, legal counsel or an advocate should be allowed in the hearing process.

2. **Expanding Current Alternatives** - Remediation and counseling (development of emotional intelligence, decision-making skills, conflict resolution and anger management) should be part of the response to discipline problems. If suspension is inevitable, then in-house suspension with full responsibility for work missed is greatly preferable to any other of the more isolating alternatives.

- a. The **Youth Outreach** model in use at the Teen Learning Center should be available to high school students, who would benefit equally by the individual approach and the combination of geographic separation, instruction and counseling.
- b. The **Aurora Alternative School** option should be better publicized to students and families.
- c. The **Jukebox** program should be expanded to be available even for serious offenses, to avoid loss of time and difficulties at reintegration. The provision of assignments for Jukebox attendees is essential and must be highly organized and maintained throughout their attendance period.

3. **New alternatives:** Mediation in conflict, victim-offender reconciliation, community service and other consequences that closely fit the offense should be integrated into the response repertoire as alternatives to the rejection and isolation of expulsion.

4. **Clear reduction goals:** Reducing the number of suspensions and expulsions must be given highest priority by top-level administrators, and mechanisms must be in place to monitor progress. Without an adequate structure in place to make them work, goals cannot be met effectively.

- a. Only with clearly defined goals are evaluation and research made possible. The reduction rate could be set by annual percent, e.g., 5% annual reduction expected the first year.
- b. Reduction rates also must be set with regard to the disparities in the application of disciplinary practices between Caucasian students and students of color. Statistics from state reports should be used to measure reduction rates. These state data, compiled by the Indiana University Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, can provide the baseline rates against which progress will be measured.
- c. Rules surrounding discipline data entry and record keeping must be consistent throughout the district.
- d. When reduction goals are achieved, apply rewards and recognition. To demonstrate the value placed on these reduction goals, appropriate incentives must be built into daily practice; for example, the district might include effective prevention practices and lower suspension/expulsion rates in professional growth and evaluation procedures.

Section B: Prevention through Improving School Climate

1. The work of the Human Understanding and Diversity must become an organic part of the fabric of school culture, for everyone at the building level as well as in the various MCCSC departments and in Central Administration. If our track record is to improve, strong leadership from the district administration, in word and in action, is indispensable. Equity in education is not a choice but a necessity if disparities are to be eliminated.
2. HU&D membership must include a cross-section of students, certified and non-certified staff and community members. Student voice needs to be represented on all levels and across departments.
3. We recognize that trainings for the administrative leadership have been implemented through the Human Understanding and Diversity initiative. Ongoing professional development in the area of diversity needs to continue, extending to all MCCSC personnel, students and parents.
4. The work of HU&D should be directly related to the needs expressed by students and families, staff and community. Some of the parental and community concerns expressed to The Forum include:
 - a. Welcoming climate. So far as is possible, certified and support staff should make every effort to learn and use students' names; the practice of **greeting students daily** need not be limited to the elementary schools – older students will respond to this personal approach.
 - b. Small school concept. Create community in the secondary schools by developing **advisory groups** (e.g., Jackson Creek) with a small student/staff ratio that meet regularly, establish trusting relationships and peer advisories, and assure that all students know there is an adult looking out for them. Structures that are already in place but underutilized should be developed in support of the district's efforts to eliminate bias and discrimination in the schools. Examples of structures that might lend themselves to such growth are: the Lifeskills curriculum, the Ophelia Project on Relational Aggression, the high schools' Seminar and SRT hours, etc.
 - c. Increase adult presence. Involve community members, Commissioners, non-certified staff, business, mentors, visitors, presenters, etc., to create that "village" mentality in which everyone is looking out for everyone's children and the students feel well cared for. Promote "shadow your son/daughter" and "shadow your parent/mentor" days. Community adult involvement needs to be integrated into the daily routine of school life such that it contributes positively rather than interrupts or disrupts. Schools that have had previous successes in this area (i.e., Big Brothers Big Sisters' "Friends Learn with Me" and Title I "Community Partners in Reading" program) provide opportunities for observation and cross-system training to disseminate these methods and procedures.

- d. Student Investment. Foster greater student responsibility for self, for other individuals and for the community. The MCCSC visit to Vermont prompts this recommendation. The Forum rests believes that students who have a vested and significant role in co-creating the learning community are students who feel ownership of their environment and who work consciously to support it. Such a community requires few rules and sees few breaches of those rules. Everyone shares responsibility for keeping the schools safe and welcoming. MCCSC leadership must involve students in decision-making and in sharing responsibility for their behavior and the behavior of others.
- e. Communicate with the Community. Keep all members of the community well informed. Use the local media and community partnerships to publicize and repeat regularly information, expectations and regulations by which all must abide. Educate the whole community regarding practices and policies in the schools. Do not expect that all parents can or want to come to the schools; take the message out to the community through clubs, the workplace, community centers and churches. MCCSC and the Forum must hold student and parent focus groups, where they feel they can risk being honest about their experiences and feelings. Invite not only at-risk students but also a representative sample.
- f. Teachers and Principals Talk to Parents Early and Often. Early positive communication with the home should be expected. Teachers should be expected to make a positive contact with parents soon after classes begin to establish the beginnings of on-going communication. Particular attention should be paid to supporting and training teachers to communicate directly and effectively with parents. MCCSC leaders must provide the training time and the implementation time necessary for this type of communication to occur with any regularity. Communication takes time and persistent effort. When problems occur, no matter how small, the school should inform families early and often; involve them immediately to collaborate on the response and to help form the plan for changing the behavior or situation that gave rise to the problem.

When such notice is given, **parents too must respond in a timely fashion**, by phone or school visits, to demonstrate to students that school and home are collaborating to support them and effect improvement.

- g. Peer expertise. Provide opportunities for professional development among peers by inviting administrators with “good track records” – low suspension/expulsion numbers, good attendance, and effective classroom management – to share their experiences with other administrators. The building-level Human Understanding and Diversity committees could provide the venue for such peer-to-peer sharing of successes. The HU&D should periodically publish these in-house “best practices.”
- h. Enhance Community Partnerships. Utilize non-profit agencies in Monroe County that offer a wide variety of resources, services, and professional development

trainers in the areas of conflict resolution and prevention. Youth Services Bureau, Center for Evaluation & Education Policy, Community Justice and Mediation, IU, Ivy Tech etc., are examples of organizations are willing to partner with the MCCSC.

The Forum understands that systemic change takes time, not only in the sense of the months and years required for change to become firmly established, but also in the sense of the hours and days required to work towards change. However, it is essential now that time, resources and funding be wisely allocated, within today's lamentably tight education budget, to support diversity work. It is vital to give teachers, students and support staff release time during regular school hours to bring about lasting change. It is important that Human Understanding and Diversity efforts never viewed as supplemental, add-ons, or extra-curricular activities. Any cultural growth in the MCCSC, in order to be lasting, must continue to be interwoven into the fabric of the daily operations of our schools. Human Understanding and Diversity forever be viewed as more than an opportunity for our schools to improve, but as the responsibility of our schools to improve.

The Forum looks forward to your response to the aforementioned recommendations and a new year working partnering with the MCCSC to foster educational success for all students of color and diversity.